MINUTES

Faculty Senate
September 11, 2026
2:30 – 4:15 p.m.
Torgersen 1000 and via Zoom

Present – Justin Lemkul (presiding), Luke Achenie, Joe Adams, Kereshmeh Afsari (alternate for Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan), Diane Agud, Coy Allen, Aaron Ansell, Rick Ashley, Diana Bairaktarova, Jeb Barrett, Joseph Bedford, Kristen Benson, Nathaniel Bishop, Warren Booth, Bradley Bowen, Curtis Bower, Ryan Calder, Silas Cassinelli, Sherwood Clements, Nick Copeland, Carolyn Copenheaver, Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Naomi Dunn, Anna Duraj-Thatte, Jeannine Eddleton, Bob Edmison, Matt Eick, Candace Fitch, Nicholas Goedert, Ann Gregus, Barrett Gutter, Wesley Gwaltney, Aymen Halouani, Samantha Harden, James Hawdon, Jia-Qiang He, William Headley, Rebecca Hester, Adrienne Holz, Yili Hong, Laura Iancu (alternate for Logan Dandridge), Alex Kinnaman, Bettibel Kreye, Jake Lahne, Renee LeClair, Mark Limes, Wei Liu, Kimberly Loeffert, G.Q. Lu, Jason Malone, Stephen Martin, Ron Meyers, Phil Nelson, Laura Neser (alternate for Marc Michel), Gregory Novack, Sarah Parker, Adam Phillips (alternate for Amy Pruden-Bagchi), Monica Ponder, Mark Psiaki, Isis Quinlan, Shelly Rhoads, Micah Roos, Steven Rowson, Yi Shi, Ian Shoemaker, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa (alternate for Joel McGlothlin), Byron Tsang, Jerald Walz, AK Ward, Jeff Warfford, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Ihudiya Finda Williams, Boya Xu, Lijuan Yuan (alternate for CVM CFA)

Absent with Notice: Azziza Bankole, Sarah Karpanty

Absent: David Bieri, Myra Blanco, Jan Helge Bøhn, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Urs Buehlmann, Jonathan Carmouche, Kevin Cheng, Logan Dandridge, Cassandra Efkeman, Mark Freeman, David Gregory, Aaron Gross, Daniel Karolyi, Lara Khansa, Bettina Koch, Catherine Larochelle, Eric Martin, Joel McGlothlin, Harold McKenzie, Marc Michel, Rachel Miles, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Amy Pruden-Bagchi, John Richey, Nino Ripepi, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Caroline Saouma

Guests: Ashley Bray, John Jelesko, Ryan Purcell, Demetria Somervell, Tammy Trimble

Justin Lemkul called the meeting to order at 2:32. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Consent Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the consent agenda which consisted of the items below. Motion carried.

- Approval of minutes from August 28, 2026
- Approval of agenda for September 11, 2026

2. Updates and Announcements

Faculty Senate President Office Hours

Faculty Senate President Office hours are held in Burruss 328B and are open to all Virginia Tech employees. The schedule for the 2026/2027 academic year is available on the Faculty Senate website. Office Hours for this month will be held on September 25 from 10 a.m. - noon.

The next academic freedom forum will feature Provost Julie Ross and former Provost Cyril Clarke and will be held at the Inn at Virginia Tech with livestream available. This event is sponsored by the Faculty Senate, Office of Faculty Affairs and the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month Event
Artistic Excellence and Professional Inclusion will be held on October 5, 2:30 – 3:45. p.m. as part of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This event features a conversation with neurodivergent artists of Teatro La Plazawill and will be held live at The Cube, 190 Alumni Mall, with livestream available.

Department Heads Council Briefing
Jim Hawdon, Faculty Senate Vice President, provided an update from the most recent Department Heads Council meeting. Topics at the meeting included undergraduate, graduate, and international enrollment; interest and support from the Board of Visitors (BOV) for funded research; and the request for departments to consider the specific disciplines in their departments and ways to promote those to potential students.

International Student Information
A brief summary of upcoming changes regarding visas for international students, impacts to services available through Cranwell International Center, and federal-level outlooks was provided.

University Operations Adjustment for October 2
Due to impacts from the nationally televised VT vs Pittsburg football game to be held on October 2, Blacksburg in-person classes beginning at or after 3:00 p.m. will be canceled. On-line classes will be held as scheduled.

3. **Unfinished Business**

Appointments to the Faculty Senate Cabinet
Every college and the University Library appoint one senator to serve as a representative on the Faculty Senate Cabinet. Most appointments were made at the August Faculty Senate meeting. Following that meeting, Ryan Calder was selected to represent the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine. A representative is needed for the College of Architecture, Arts, and Design.

Commission and Committee Vacancies
Faculty representatives are needed for the following shared governance Commissions and Committees. Term length and meeting information was provided. The floor was opened for nominations, and a motion was made and seconded to vote on the nominees.

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) – Diana Bairaktarova was nominated and elected to serve on CUSP.

Faculty Honorifics Committee – Joe Eska was previously nominated to serve on the committee; there were no additional nominees from the floor. Joe Eska was elected to serve on the Faculty Honorifics Committee.

Commission on Graduate and Professional Student Affairs (CGPSA) – Samantha Harden was nominated and elected to serve on CGPSA.

Commission on Outreach and International Affairs (COIA) – Rebecca Hester was nominated and elected to serve on COIA.

Confirmation of Policy and Procedures Committee
The Policy and Procedures Committee is an internal standing Faculty Senate committee. In accordance with the Faculty Senate Constitution, Justin Lemkul recommended that Micah Roos and Jake Lahne serve on this committee. A motion was made and seconded to confirm these appointments, and both were confirmed by unanimous consent.

Confirmation of Parliamentarian
Justin Lemkul recommended Jerald Walz to serve as Parliamentarian for the Faculty Senate for this academic year. A motion was made and seconded to confirm this appointment, and Jerald Walz was confirmed by unanimous consent to serve as Parliamentarian.

4. New Business

Appointment to the Employee Benefits Committee
A faculty representative is needed to serve on the Employee Benefits Committee. Term dates and meeting information were provided. The floor was opened for nominations, but no nominations were received. This vacancy will be revisited at the next Faculty Senate meeting.

Presentation of Commission Work Plans
The chairs of commissions that report to the Faculty Senate provided brief summaries of their workplans for the academic year. A commission may adjust goals during the academic year in response to emerging issues. Workplans for all shared governance bodies will be available for review on the governance website following the September 14, 2026, University Council meeting.

Jake Lahne presented goals for the Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA). Goals include reviewing the collegiate faculty series; updating and clarifying sections in the Faculty Handbook that address several topics; incorporating updates reflected in Policy 6500, Academic Programs: Creation, Discontinuance, and Delivery Site; and launching a study on faculty time-use related to university internal systems and procedures.

Jerald Walz provided an overview of Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies (CGPSP) goals: continuing the work of a subcommittee focused on streamlining the processes of professional master's programs; implementing a graduate student grievance process; potential graduate and professional policy changes. An additional goal that is expected to be added is adjusting committee membership by increasing the number of faculty senate representatives.

Ryan Calder presented goals for the Commission on Research (COR), which include review of the Fralin Life Sciences Institute (FLSI) and the VT-National Security Institute (VT-NSI); revising Policy 13015 (Ownership and Control of Research Data, Results, and Related Materials), Policy 13020 (Policy on Misconduct in Research), and Policy 13005 (Centers and University Institutes: Establishment, Governance and Programmatic Oversight); establishing a standing committee on postdocs; and developing recommendations for improving continuity of COR leadership.

Sherwood Clements shared an overview of goals from the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP), which include the following: continuing to gather data related to a 2-Day Fall Break for students and potentially bringing forward a proposal on this topic; defining "attempt" and

“repeatability” in regard to undergraduate student class polices and schedules; identifying items utilized in courses such as IClickers and TopHat that may be a significant cost burden for students and addressing whether these are required to enhance classroom success and exploring potential remedies. An additional goal that may be added is the text messaging policy discussed at the end of the Spring 2026 semester.

First Reading of Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA) Resolution 2026-27C Resolution to Review and Update Collegiate Faculty Series

Jake Lahne presented CFA 2026-27 for first reading. This resolution focuses on Chapter 5 of the Faculty Handbook which delineates non-tenure track faculty. Proposed revisions include changing the title from “Non-Tenure Track Instructional Faculty” to “Non-Tenure Track Teaching & Research Faculty” for clarification. Additionally, definitions of each faculty series under the non-tenure track faculty category have been added to the beginning of Section 5.0, and a statement recognizing the need to protect academic freedom has been added at the end of this section. An overview of the additional proposed language adjustments and changes was provided. These revisions were prepared in response to comments received by faculty, and seek to provide clarification and better streamline information.

Discussion on the topic of promotion for these ranks, specifically the requirement for regional, national, or international prominence and related external evaluation was held. These and additional comments and suggestions shared by faculty will be considered by the commission.

5. Visit with Director of Services for Students with Disabilities, Ashley Bray

Justin Lemkul welcomed Ashley Bray, Director of Services for Students with Disabilities, to the Faculty Senate, for a discussion on topics of interest from Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). SSD’s role includes consultation, facilitation, and compliance support for students and faculty.

Ms. Bray began by providing an overview of progress achieved during the 2025-2026 academic year including the Accessible Information Management Flex Plan; updates to the Werth Testing Center and Register Blast which is new at VT and utilized by many universities at a national level; process improvements; the adoption of an Outreach and Engagement Framework to increase access; and a student and faculty facing toolkit scheduled to launch this fall.

SSD has received questions regarding a decrease in accommodation requests to date this year. Reasons for this include transitions from K-12 to post-secondary accommodation models, students may be waiting to determine whether accommodations are needed or potentially be accessing services differently, and changes in enrollment, student awareness, referral patterns, and engagement with SSD.

Limited discussion on asynchronous and remote participation requests was held and questions for faculty to consider were provided.

Discussion followed and included the following topics (1) questions and concerns shared by faculty; (2) faculty members who allow questions during exams in class may indicate that preference and provide their contact information to SSD, and SSD will allow a phone call upon student request; (3) accommodations for graduate students, workplace accommodations, and legal requirements for disability services; (4) students have autonomy of when to submit accommodation information to faculty and how they navigate systems, and (5) documentation guidelines and self-reporting.

6. Open Floor

Retirement of Kim O'Rourke, Vice President of Policy and Governance
Kim O'Rourke is retiring following 48 years of service to Virginia Tech. A University Council resolution making updates to the University Council Constitution will be brought forward by VP O'Rourke before her retirement.

Letter regarding faculty representation on the Presidential Search Committee
A faculty member reported that a letter is being circulated throughout the university community regarding faculty representation on the Presidential Search Committee. Updates on the search were provided by Justin Lemkul.

Funded Research
Suggestions and limited discussion regarding funded research and the BOV's support of funded research were shared. Provost Julie Ross is expected to provide information on this topic at the November BOV meeting.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:25.